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JAMES OSBORNE SAFFORD,

MEMBER OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE  
ESSEX INSTITUTE FROM 1874 TO 1883.

A sketch read at the annual meeting, May, 1883.

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BY ROBERT S. RANTOUL.

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IF a keen sense of personal loss unfits one to be the biographer of another, the writer of this brief memorial of James O. Safford has not been fortunately chosen. Naturally the number of persons who come very close to us in life,— who come to make themselves part and parcel of our daily lives,— who, by manifesting a constant, spontaneous and unremitting sympathy in all that we are and do, make us feel that our troubles and successes, our daily living and all our belongings and surroundings have an interest for them as though these were their own,— naturally the number of such friends permitted to most of us is very small indeed. When we lose them it is not easy so far to divorce ourselves from that which is personal in the relation as to be able to say what those who stood in no such relation may be expecting to hear. I can speak of Mr. Safford only as he was known to me.

James Osborne Safford was born June 21, 1819, at a homestead purchased by his father the preceding November, on the corner of Boston and Beaver streets, in territory which is now part of Salem, but was then in Danvers. He was the second son of Captain Ebenezer Safford, a much respected tanner of that section, who earned his military title in the state artillery of 1812. Captain Safford had come to Salem when a boy from his native town of Ipswich, had learned his trade with Matthew Purinton, the Quaker tanner of Salem, had bought the tan-yard on Goodhue street, now the property of James Turner and forming the corner of the new Bridge street extension, and had married December 21, 1808, Hannah Osborne, of the numerous and highly esteemed Danvers family of that name.

The Saffords are of the good, old, puritan stock. We find the English ancestor settled at Ipswich as early as 1641, and two Thomases, two Ebenezers, a John, a Daniel and a James, all scriptural, puritan, New England names, complete the lineage to the present day. The record of the Safford line of ancestry is traced in a note to be added to this memorial, from material kindly furnished to the files of the Institute by Hon. Nathaniel F. Safford of Milton. Of the four children of Captain Safford, two daughters survive, while the elder brother, Ebenezer Warren Safford, a successful leather-dealer of Brooklyn and New York, died at the old homestead in Salem March 20, 1869, in his fifty-sixth year. The mother lived to a good old age and, after seeing both of her sons established in life, died June 5, 1848, in her seventy-second year. But the father died at fifty-five, May 26, 1831, and his death was announced in the Salem Gazette of the following day, in words so prophetic of the character of the son that I readily give place to them.

Of this "truly estimable citizen," Captain Safford, it was there remarked: "It may justly be said of him that no one sustained the various relations of husband, parent, son and brother, in a more kind and endearing manner. As a neighbor and friend, he was frank and undisguised in all his actions and feelings,—full of sympathy and sorrow at the misfortune and distress of a fellow-being,—upright and honorable in his dealings."

Deprived at the age of twelve of such a father, James O. Safford enjoyed at Danvers for a few years longer the common educational advantages of the day, and then, in 1838, at the age of nineteen, set out for himself upon a business career, first entering the well-established Hides and Leather house of the late James P. Thorndike of Blackstone street, Boston, once located in Salem at the entrance to the turnpike. He early learned,—it would be difficult to say how early he learned the first and last lesson of practical affairs, which is self-reliance. He asked as boy or man no odds of fortune. When he saw what needed to be done and felt that he could do it, he warmed to the endeavor. The opportunity that opened before him was his opportunity. It did not matter to him how some other person might have met it; he met it as well as he could. It was not his way to demur because, perchance, some one else might be more familiar with the problem which seemed to be set before him to solve. He attacked it at once. Singularly unconcerned about the judgment of the world, he pursued with great intelligence, with a cheerful energy and with entire absorption in his work the line of effort which seemed to him best suited to his end, turning neither to the right to conciliate an adverse judgment, nor to the left to avoid the chance of collision,—nothing doubting of the result. Whatever his merits, whatever his limitations, they were his own. It

is not a little thing to say of a character under remark in this age of growing interdependence and infinite, artificial social convolutions, that it is self-poised and rests firmly within its base. If this could be said of any man it was true of him. And if a kinder heart beat anywhere in a bosom more alive to the calls of friendship, charity and good-neighborhood,—if any of us has better filled out the measure of duty, domestic, personal or public,—has found more pleasure in the high things of life,—in advancing the solid happiness of those about him, then the world would seem to be richer in good qualities than most of us are inclined to suppose it.

After a probationary period of ten years in a business which has now become one of the great staples of Massachusetts industry, Mr. Safford established himself first in Blackstone street, with James P. Thorndike as a special partner, in 1848 and afterwards alone in 1851. He married June 29, 1852, Nancy Maria, daughter of James and Lydia (Eustis) Potter of Salem, who survives him, and after his marriage resided in Salem. Three children, James Potter, William Osborne and Elizabeth Frothingham, also survive him. His business operations extended themselves widely, including both the manufacture of leather and the sale on commission of leather and hides, and these were often carried on at distant points. He was chosen November 1, 1859, a director of the old North Bank of Boston, and on March 19, 1883, the president and directors, in view of his decease, unanimously recorded the resolve that his uninterrupted service in that capacity for twenty-four years called for their "hearty recognition of his high integrity as an intelligent business man, and of his untiring fidelity to his trust in that institution: also of his genial and warm-hearted bearing as a friend." He was a director of the Naumkeag



Steam Cotton Company, our largest incorporated enterprise, from January, 1871, until his death. And at their meeting April 16, 1883, the president and directors of this corporation, in recording their "tribute of respect for the character and memory of one so long associated" with them, expressed their sense of loss at the death of a "valued citizen," "mourned by all who knew him and by the community in which he lived,"—a fast friend of their enterprise, who had "conscientiously and faithfully performed all the duties pertaining to his office." And they further resolved that "in his intercourse with us he won our confidence and esteem, and now, while we look upon his vacant seat and mourn his absence, we will cherish his memory and recall his kind, cordial and pleasant manner, ever to be held in affectionate remembrance."

But while the pursuit of practical affairs was with him an engrossing passion and while he enjoyed to the utmost the exercise of the rare gift for large business combinations with which he was endowed, he was not betrayed into forgetfulness of social and public duties. He held large views of local enterprise and of municipal expenditure. He desired to see the city of his home compare well with her sister cities of the commonwealth and of the county. Whatever reflected injuriously upon Salem had a pang for him. His own business success was identified with the growth and welfare not so much of Salem as of her greater rival, for it is thus that Boston, since the day of railroads, draws out of the arteries of her neighbors the life-current that sustains her, but he withheld neither voice nor hand from any local enterprise of a public nature which promised advantage to the city, nor overlooked, in the apprehension of an increase of taxes, the patent fact that no more remunerative investment of private funds is ever made than when they are spent in judicious, well-ordered municipal

improvements. When it became evident that Salem was placed at a disadvantage with other cities by reason of her inadequate supply of water, Mr. Safford was early, active and constant in support of the needful steps to set her right, and in May, 1865, at considerable inconvenience to himself, for the demands of his private business were exacting, he consented to an election to the city council. Here he served for four years, filling a place in 1866-7-8 on the Joint Standing Committee on Finance and Appropriations, and bearing a conspicuous part in the delicate service of placing the city water loan on the market to the best advantage. To none of her citizens does Salem owe more than to James O. Safford, for public spirit, business sagacity, zeal and firmness displayed in her behalf, in connection with the most considerable financial undertaking in which it has yet been her fortune to embark.

But he had public spirit in a larger sense and was patriotic. In time of peace he was not willing to stand idly by and let the ship of state drift. Political duties, be they onerous or inconvenient, were duties still. Throughout the terrible ordeal of civil war, Mr. Safford left nobody in doubt about his sympathies and convictions, but was ready among the first and constant to the last to bear a man's part. Periods of ill-success in arms, — periods of threatened interference from abroad — periods of financial derangement quite as serious, — periods of shifting policy and uncertain duty, dividing the councils of leaders and distracting the loyalty of the faithful, might come and go. He was of those who, from first to last, did not despair. Whoever faltered, he stood firm. And when at last madness exhausted itself in collapse, — a collapse more sudden and complete than sanguine prognosticators had ventured to forecast — and the rebellion ended, it was my fortune to be summoned from my dreams on that moment-

ous April morning by a hailstorm of gravel at my chamber window and to hear from the lips of my friend the most stupendous piece of intelligence it had been given him in his life to utter, or me in mine to hear.

He had energy and zeal and courage and good judgment and that faculty for prompt decision which goes so far towards assured success. He had a keen sense of humor, and an instinct to recognize good, intellectual work, and an habitual drollery and good cheer which also go far indeed to make their possessor superior to fortune, and his society attractive. When the great Boston fire of November, 1872, turned the warehouse in Congress street which he had locked up on that fateful Saturday night, stock, counting-room and all, into an undistinguishable heap of rubbish before morning, and the worth or worthlessness of insurance policies was for the moment an unsolved problem, he lost no time in idle regrets, but pushed steadily though cautiously on, and was among the first to announce himself as ready for business again, in a restored and better appointed structure on the site which he had occupied for his business since Jan'y, 1865. He had bought, June 24, 1871, the elegant Salem mansion house, built by John Andrew in 1818, on the westerly side of what was then called Washington place, of which Governor Andrew used to say, as often as he passed it, that he hoped to live in it, if ever he found himself able to have a home out of Boston. From the rear windows of Plummer Hall this residence affords a most attractive picture. It is not less fortunate in its traditions. It was reputed to be of wonderful construction. Its stately columns of hollow wood, said to be packed with rock salt from the Russia trade which furnished the wealth employed to rear it,—its masonry of bricks dipped hot in oil,—its floors of stone, —its solid chamber-walls, completing a structure imper-

vious to sound, and of such enduring quality that the master-builder set in his monumental work a tile, bearing in relief the initials of his name and the date of the building, — the gossips' story of its ample hearth-stones smoking with back-logs of sandal-wood brought home for dunnage in our commercial era, and of parlor, hall and dadoed chamber full of the aroma, — such tales as these floating in the air, be they mythical or true, predispose us to expect a hospitable atmosphere within, and this expectation, during Mr. Safford's occupancy, was not defeated. From the autumn of 1871, when he occupied the house, its doors were open to an ever-widening circle. For his sympathies were catholic, and while the range of his acquaintance brought persons of varied character and mental equipment within his ken, he had that rare faculty, so invaluable to the host, of drawing his best from each.

He loved nature in all her phases. His eye was quick, — his form erect, — his tread firm and elastic. He liked a fresh horse and the fresh of the morning. His personal tastes were pure and healthy. Thoroughly domestic in his instincts, it was his life-long habit to pass the little leisure he allowed himself either in driving with his family, in tending in his garden the fruits, vines and flowers he took such care and pride in cultivating, or in some simple recreation at home in which those nearest him would like to join. Did some agreeable experience invite him? He was quick to think of some one who would like to share it. Did an opportunity for some service to another disclose itself? He did not wait to have it pointed out, nor once discovered was he likely to forget it. I think few men have enjoyed more keenly the luxury of quiet benefaction. No one who could so thoroughly identify himself with the happiness of children — no one who could draw such a fund of pleasure from watching year by year the bursting

buds and unfolding petals and all the marvelously engaging though familiar processes of nature, needs any other patent to attest the quality of his manhood.

As a vestryman and constant attendant at St. Peter's, Mr. Safford made himself a highly valued member of that parish. He was chosen vestryman at Easter, 1865, and continued in the office until he declined a reelection in 1882. As trustee of parochial funds and as a member of committees for the management of church charities and building operations, he was ready, liberal, and active.

He became a member of the Essex Institute January 4, 1854, and at the annual meeting in May, 1874, was chosen to a place on the Finance Committee which he filled until his death. His services on other committees from time to time have been cheerfully rendered.

He died at Salem, March 18, 1883.

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## GENEALOGICAL NOTE

FROM MATERIAL FURNISHED THE ESSEX INSTITUTE BY  
NATHANIEL F. SAFFORD.

**James Osborne Safford** was born in Danvers June 21, 1819, and died at his residence, Salem, March 18, 1883, in his sixty-fourth year. His lineage is of

**1 Thomas Safford** of Ipswich, resident there 1641, and owner of an estate there prior to April 6 of that year. Freeman, Dec. 19, 1648. Prior to his decease, which occurred Feb. 20, 1667, he made provision for the main-

tenance of his wife and three daughters, from the occupaney of his farm of sixty acres and from annuities.

His widow Elizabeth died at Ipswich March 4, 1671.  
Their children were :

Joseph, b. 1631.

John<sup>2</sup>, b. 1633.

Elizabeth.

Mary.

Abigail.

In 1641, the time when the name Thomas Safford is first met with at Ipswich, two hundred names are enumerated in the list of settlers at Agawam since the settlement there of Winthrop, jr., and others in March, 1633. It was called Ipswich Aug. 4, 1634, in recognition of the kindness conferred upon our people by the town of that name in England, where "our people took shipping." There are persons of the surname Safford now resident in that old town from which these took shipping; but no facts are ascertained connecting the lineage of this family with any other, prior to 1641. The surname is of Saxon derivation and occurs in the early part of the thirteenth century, — likewise in an inscription upon an ancient seal of one of the towns upon the English coast — *i. e.*, "Sigillum Burgensium de Saffordia;—" also in the list of emigrants to Virginia 1613–1623.

**2 John**, born 1633, was also at Ipswich 1665; makes conveyance of real estate to his son *Thomas* for the maintenance of his wife and daughter, dated Sept. 5, 1698, in terms not dissimilar from that made by his father. His wife Sarah S. joins in the same.

Their children were :

Sarah, b. July 14, 1664; d. July 21, 1712.  
 Margaret, b. Feb. 28, 1666.  
 Rebecca, b. Aug. 30, 1667.  
 Mary, b. Feb. 26, 1669.  
 Elizabeth, b. Feb. 27, 1671.  
 Thomas<sup>3</sup>, b. Oct. 16, 1672.  
 Joseph, b. March 12, 1675.

**3 Thomas**, born Oct. 16, 1672, married Oct. 7, 1698, Eleanor Setchwell; she died Dec. 22, 1724; married 2d, in Rowley, 29 June, 1725, Sarah Scott.

His inventory April 15, 1754. The inventory contains some of the same parcels belonging to his grandfather in Ipswich, and six or more parcels acquired by purchase.

The children of Thomas and Elinor, were :

Sarah, b. March 29, 1701; d. July 10, 1702.  
 Thomas, b. April 28, 1703.  
 Joseph, b. March, 1704-5.  
 Daniel<sup>4</sup>, b. 1706.  
 John.  
 Nathan, b. March 16, 1712.  
 James, b. June 27, 1714.  
 Stephen, b. March 10, 1716-17.  
 Titus, bapt<sup>d</sup> Feb. 24, 1722-23; d. Apr. 11, 1729.

**4 Daniel**, b. 1706, m. Abigail Foster (*vide* Reginald F.) Pub. int. marriage March 10, 1732. She died Apr. 12, 1736.

By 2d marriage (Hannah Hovey) children were :

Hannah — Abigail — Mary — Ebenezer<sup>5</sup>, bapt<sup>d</sup> Apr. 3, 1748.  
 Deacon William Safford of Central st., Salem, bapt<sup>d</sup> Feb. 22, 1756, was also son of Daniel<sup>4</sup>.

Daniel died at Ipswich May 24, 1796, *æt.* 90 yrs.

**5 Ebenezer**, bapt<sup>d</sup> Apr. 3, 1748. Pub. int. m. (L. H.) March 14, 1772. Children were :

Hannah, m. Daniel Low. She died Oct. 6, 1817.

Ebenezer<sup>6</sup>, b. at Ipswich, Aug. 27, 1775; d. May 26, 1831.

William, b. March 27, 1779; d. Jan. 17, 1868.

Lucy, died March 12, 1851.

Susan, m. Nathan Safford, Dec. 24, 1815; d. Nov. 20, 1826.

**6 Ebenezer**, born at Ipswich, Aug. 27, 1775; m. Hannah Osborne, Dec. 21, 1808. He died May 26, 1831.

Hannah O., b. Jan. 20, 1777; d. June 5, 1848.

Their children :

Martha Osborne — Ebenezer Warren — Harriet Persis — James

Osborne<sup>7</sup>, b. June 21; 1819, m. June 29, 1852, Nancy

Maria Potter; d. March 18, 1883.





